

Press release: Broadband boost for businesses

Suppliers will be offering vouchers worth between £500 and £3000 each to local businesses which can then be used to pay for the installation of gigabit speed connections. The aim of the pilots is to encourage the market to extend full fibre infrastructure in the UK by increasing demand and reducing the cost to customers.

The many benefits of a full fibre gigabit connection include:

- allowing businesses to upload and download massive files in a matter of seconds
- enabling widespread use of videoconferencing throughout an organisation
- providing an unprecedented level of reliability whilst greatly enhancing resilience
- future proofing – making sure that businesses have the technology in place to deal with the ever increasing demands for internet speed and connectivity
- allowing businesses in remote communities to compete on a technologically level playing field with those companies based in major cities who may already have full fibre connectivity

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

A world-class digital communications network is essential to ensure the UK's future competitiveness in the global market and its ability to attract investment. Faster and more reliable connections are transforming the way we live and work, and better broadband supports businesses to grow and become more productive.

These voucher pilots, alongside a range of other actions, are testament to Government's ambition for full fibre infrastructure across the UK to underpin our digital economy.

Four areas across the UK have been carefully selected to test the market conditions and infrastructure conditions we aim to help to create through the wider Local Full Fibre Network programme. The areas are:

- Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire
- Bristol, with Bath and North East Somerset
- Coventry and Warwickshire
- West Yorkshire Combined Authority (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield and York)

This programme comes as part of the government's £23 billion National Productivity Investment Fund aimed at improving productivity, which is key to raising living standards. This fund has already earmarked £740 million

specifically for improving Britain's digital infrastructure, ensuring the UK is match-fit for the future.

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Andrew Jones MP, said:

We are determined to provide the infrastructure needed for British businesses to thrive and prosper. The rollout of next generation, full-fibre broadband will help do that.

Lightning internet speeds and unprecedented reliability will boost trade and ensure our firms can connect effortlessly to their customers and suppliers.

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Notes to Editors

- For more information on the scheme, please go to <https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>
- The trial voucher Scheme will only allow vouchers to be used to help pay for new connections that are "gigabit capable". Generally, this will mean that the connection is physically delivered using a fibre optic cable directly into the premises (FTTP).
- Connections delivered this way are future-proof and have the capability to provide incredibly fast and reliable broadband connections. Other technologies are supported by the Scheme – for example, wireless – but these too must provide gigabit capable connectivity.
- The trials comes hot on the heels of the [Digital Infrastructure Investment Fund](#) announced earlier in the year, as well as new legislation to enable business rates relief for new fibre. Unlocking more than £1 billion for full fibre broadband, the fund has ignited interest from private finance to invest in the sector.
- £2m has been made available for vouchers for the test phase. Across the four areas this fund will operate as a single challenge fund. The market test phase will end when the money has gone or by the end of March 2019, whichever comes first.
- In order to take part in the Scheme, suppliers must be registered and must be able to demonstrate that they are genuinely able to provide the high quality connectivity the Scheme aims to support. If you think you meet these criteria in the areas where the test is taking place, contact us at: <https://www.gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk>